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DE RUEHKH #0344/01 0711457
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 121457Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3240
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000344

DEPT FOR AF A A/S CARTER, AF/SPG, AF/E
NSC FOR MGAVIN AND CHUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: UPDATE FROM DARFUR - KIDNAPPINGS, ATTEMPTED UNAMID
CARJACKING, AND NERVOUS IDPs

REF: A) KHARTOUM 339
B) KHARTOUM 324

¶1. Summary: The GOS has "lit a slow-burning fuse" in denying key international NGOs access, and IDPs remain convinced that GOS authorities purposefully intend to reduce humanitarian coverage in Darfur, sources in UNAMID and among IDPs indicate. IDPs queued and drained water reserves in camps this week, as GOS authorities throughout the region presented only piecemeal plans to provide for IDPs' water and sanitation needs. UNAMID is investigating two seemingly unrelated security incidents in El Geneina and El Fasher. Five staff - three international and two local - from MSF-Belgium were kidnapped from an isolated rural location on March 11; the three international staff members remain held hostage as of March ¶12. End summary.

UNRELATED ATTACKS ON UNAMID, NGO KIDNAPPINGS

¶2. (SBU) UNAMID continues to follow up on the March 9 attack on four UNAMID soldiers in El Geneina, West Darfur, and the March 11 carjacking in El Fasher, North Darfur. On March 9 at 7:45 p.m., one Rwandan and three Nigerian soldiers were reportedly attacked while returning to their base after escorting the UNAMID sector commander to his residence. The incident took place approximately 500 meters from the UNAMID camp. According to a UNAMID source, the car routinely escorted the Deputy Sector Commander at roughly the same time every night and returned to the camp. As to whether the attack was an attempted carjacking or an act of deliberate violence against UNAMID, the source noted that it appeared to be exceptional for a carjacking given the deadly use of force, as no warning shots were apparently fired. An official investigation is ongoing. UNAMID sources were unable to provide further details on the March 11 carjacking in El Fasher, but one source described it as a routine event for Darfur, with no serious casualties to report.

¶3. (SBU) On March 11, five aid workers from MSF-Belgium in Saraf Omra, approximately 200 km west of El Fasher on the North/West Darfur border, were kidnapped. The five - a Canadian Nurse, Italian Doctor and French coordinator, as well as two Sudanese staff - were abducted from the MSF-Belgium compound in Saraf Omra at approximately 21:00 and taken to an unknown location, according to UNDSS sources. Members of the NGO steering committee reported that two local staff members have since been released. According to the Canadian Embassy, the pro-regime kidnappers reportedly demanded that the ICC lift the arrest warrant against President Bashir as well as pay a ransom of 2 million SDG (approx USD \$800,000). More information about the kidnappings will be reported as it becomes available.

14. (SBU) The prevailing feeling on the Darfuri "street" continues to be that the GOS expulsion of the NGOs is a deliberate attempt to target Darfuris living in the camps. "The NGO expulsion is not linked to the ICC. They expelled the NGOs to dry out the camps," Mohamed Hassan El Taishi, great-grandson of Khalifa Abdullahi and a young leader of the Darfuri Arab Ta'isha tribe, told poloff on March 11. "This step will hurt the security situation, as IDPs will congregate around towns to compete for food and water." Fur leader Ahmed Abul Basher of Abu Shouk IDP camp concurred with this assessment, telling emboff on March 10 that preventing services from reaching the IDPs would weaken security in Darfur. Although no violent clashes between GOS forces and rebels have occurred following the ICC announcement on March 4, UNAMID political officer Hideo Ikebe suggested that this is because the GOS is employing new tactics in Darfur. "The government has shifted its target from the movements to the IDPs, and that's why Darfur is quiet (militarily) right now," he said.

15. (SBU) The GOS experiment in Darfur to deliver humanitarian aid will face insurmountable difficulties given the current political landscape of Darfur, sources indicate. A senior UNAMID military officer told poloff on March 12 that the GOS has "lit a slow-burning fuse," adding the situation in Darfur could deteriorate drastically in two weeks. According to Abul Basher of Abu Shouk camp, IDPs do not trust GOS-supported NGOs (so-called "GoNGOs"), passing on a conspiracy theory common in his camp that the GoNGOs intend to poison the wells in Abu Shouk. Calling the GOS decision to undertake humanitarian delivery a "big disaster," Fur leader and SPLM parliamentarian Seifeldin Abielgasim told poloff on March 11

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that the GOS has no capacity to provide for isolated rural areas such as Jebel Marra, which remain inaccessible strongholds of unaligned Arab militia and rebel movements. Abdelaziz Sam, legal advisor of the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority and a leading member of SLM/Minni Minnawi, said on March 12 that far-flung communities in the arid northwest corner of North Darfur are "completely dependent" on international NGOs, and he predicted that the decision will open the door to more insecurity in the region once isolated Darfuris deplete existing food supplies.

WATER WOES INITIATE CRISIS

16. (SBU) Since the GOS decision to expel 13 INGOs operating in Darfur, availability of water has emerged as the most pressed initial concern of IDPs. Reports from several camps indicated that IDPs are lining up to drain large water tanks whose contents are brought to the surface by gasoline-run water pumps. Speaking with emboff on March 11 from Abu Shouk IDP camp, Ahmed Abul Basher said that IDPs were currently queuing next to water boreholes, a situation causing increasing tension among IDPs worried that the provision of drinking water may soon cease. UNAMID political officer Ikebe reported that on March 11, IDPs in camps surrounding El Geniena, West Darfur, were also stocking up on water. Operating the pumps requires laborious maintenance and supervision, work which had previously been performed by INGO partners, including Save the Children US, but Sudanese authorities in West Darfur presented UNAMID with no plan for increasing water distribution to the camps. Ikebe predicted that within days camps there will be hit with a severe water shortage due to the lack of fuel available for the water pumps.

17. (SBU) According to UNICEF, Kalma and Otash IDP camps, and Kass town, all in South Darfur, have no water and sanitation providers, affecting over 245,000 Darfuri IDPs. With different sectors of Kalma IDP camp formerly managed by different INGO partners, fuel for water pumps has only been delivered to one sector of the camp by the GOS authority Water and Environmental Services (WES), but eight different sectors of the camp have no fuel to operate their water pumps. Kalma residents within those eight sectors refuse to accept any materials provided by the GOS, leaving only hand-operated pumps

to draw the remaining water from shallow wells. In locations outside of the one sector covered by WES, UNICEF is planning to quickly sub-contract national NGOs to fill the gap. The government of South Darfur has communicated to UNICEF that it intends to donate 200,000 SDG (approximately USD \$80,000) as a budget for one month to cover staff incentives, water chlorination, soap distribution and latrines construction. However, at this point, the government of South Darfur has released no plans to distribute water to Kass and Otash.

18. (SBU) Comment: While food supplies throughout Darfur should last several more weeks, the reported lack of water and sanitation among IDPs are alarming, as reports indicate several cases of meningitis in camps in South Darfur. Should Darfur witness outbreaks of previously preventable diseases such as meningitis and cholera, blame for the casualties will fall directly on senior leaders in the National Congress Party who foolishly initiated the expulsion decision. Embassy officers will attempt to go to Darfur within the next few days (regime allowing) to get some additional ground truth on the situation in the camps.

FERNANDEZ